Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras will be established in Gram Panchayat Headquarters villages.

The Gram Panchayat will be accountable to the Department of Post for ensuring proper and efficient postal services through Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendra.

The Sanchar Sewa Kendra will also be subject to regular supervision and inspection by the Department of Post.

Remuneration/Commission :

A fixed allowance of Rs. 300/- per month for providing counter services and for collection, conveyance and delivery of mail wherever permitted will be paid.

The agent of the Panchayat will be compensated for other postal services provided in the Panchyat areas by payment of :-

(a) A commission of 5% of the value of stamps/ stationery will be allowed at the time of purchase in normal rural areas. In hilly and tribal areas, commission at the following rates will be all allowed :-

(i) On sale up to Rs. 100 : 5%

(ii) On sale from Rs. 101 to 200 : 7.5%

(iii) On sale from Rs. 201 and above : 10%

(b) A commission of 50 paise for booking and delivery of a registered article.

(c) Commission at the prescribed rates for handling Mahila Samriddhi Yojana Accounts.

(d) Commission at prescribed rates for propogating Postal Life Insurance and National Savings Scheme.

(e) Commission at the rates to be prescribed for providing other services.

For operating STD/PCO/Gram Panchayat Phone, Commission as prescribed by the Department of Telecommunications shall be paid.

A system of rewarding the best Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendra in a Postal Circle will be introduced in order to encourage and motivate the Panchayat to ensure efficient postal services in the area.

[Translation]

Elections to Panchayats and Zila Parishads

1419. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the reasons for not holding the elections of Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad of Chandigarh so far whereas it is compulsory to hold the elections of such institutions within six months from the date of their constitution;

(b) whether the Government are aware that no stay order of any court is in force in this regard at present; and

(c) if so, the time by which the elections are likely to be held there?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) to (c) The elections to the Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad in the U.T. of Chandigarh were held in January, 1996, but the results could not be declared as the Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed the declaration of results on Writ Petition. The stay order new stands vacated following dismissal of the writ petition. The U.T. Administration of Chandigarh is taking further action on the formation of these bodies.

Telecommunication Facility in Rural Areas

1420. SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR SINGH :
SHRI ANANT KUMAR HEGDE :
KUMARI UMA BHARATI :
SHRIMATI KETAKI DEVI SINGH :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of poor functioning of telephone system in rural areas;

(b) if so, whether the Government have formulated any scheme for improvement in telephone service in rural areas;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the number of rural areas likely to be benefited by the said scheme;

(e) whether the progress made in rural telecommunications system is far away from the targets;

(f) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(g) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The telephone systems in rural areas are working satisfactorily except in some difficult, inaccessible and remote areas.

(b) Yes Sir.

(c) For further improving the telephone services in rural areas following steps are being taken.

(i) Provision of telephone facility to all the villages by the year 2000.

(ii) Provision of STD facility to all the exchanges by the year 2000.

(iii) Provision of reliable transmission media.

(iv) Induction of modern technologies for providing village public telephones.

(v) Increasing capacity of existing exchanges.

(vi) Replacement of small capacity exchanges by higher capacity switches.

(vii) Replacement of life-expired and obsolete switches by digital switches.

(viii) Overhead alignment in the local areas being replaced by underground cable progressively.

(d) The rural areas in all the States will be benefited by this scheme.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) and (g) Does not arise in view of (e) above.

Upliftment of Rural Artisans

1421. SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the details of schemes formulated/implemented so far for the upliftment of rural artisans;

(b) the additional facilities proposed to be given to them during 1997-98; and

(c) the items manufactured under the above schemes during the last two years and the countries to which these were exported?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) : (a) This Ministry is implementing a scheme of supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans. Under the Scheme, Rural Artisans living below poverty line are to be given improved tools to enable them to enhance the quality/ quantity/marketability of their products and reduce their drudgery. Initially, it was launched in selected districts. Later, from 1995-96 it was extended to entire country except UTs of Delhi and Chandigarh. Under this scheme, artisan from different crafts except weavers, tailors, needle workers and beedi-workers are provided improved toolkits. The average cost of toolkit is Rs. 2000/- and the unit cost is to be fixed by DRDA concerned. The artisans are required to contribute 10% of the cost of the toolkits as their contribution with the balance 90% being met as subsidy from the Government of India. The use of power driven toolkits upto the cost of Rs. 4500/- has also been permitted under the scheme. Beyond this, it is to be linked to loan under IRDP.

At the district level the DRDA is the nodel agency for implementation. The prototypes of improved tools in pottery, carpentary, black smithy, leather work, wood crafts, metal craft and lacquerware have been developed by the National Small Industries Corporation, Regional Design and Technical Development Centre under the Development Commissioner, Handicraft and other organisations. If the State Government feel that better alternative to improved tools suitable to local conditions are avilable in their States, they are free to chose those models, subject to the approval by the State Level/District level/Task Force/Technical Committee set up for the purpose.

(b) The following additional facilities are proposed to be given to the rural artisans during the year 1997-98 :

(i) Institutional arrangements for establishing marketing linkage for ensuring higher income to rural artisans.

(ii) Supply of literature with graphics and illustrations to the illiterate rural artisans for proper use of improved Toolkits.

(iii) Discussion with rural artisans after supply of toolkits about its utility and suitability.

(c) The rural artisans whom the toolkits are supplied are free to manufacture any item of their choice and they are free to sell their products anywhere they like. Information regarding export of such items to other countries is not available.

[English]

Gas Based Power Generation

1422. SHRI CHITTA BASU : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the gas-based combined cycle method of power generation is emerging as a preferred route;

(b) if so, whether the Government have since taken this route for power generation; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (c) The choice between a conventional thermal power plant and gas based combined cycle power plant depends on a variety of factors including capital cost of various alternatives, availability and price of fuel and site specific environmental conditions etc. Gas based power stations are more environment friendly and have shorter destation period, besides having higher cycle efficiency compared to coal based stations.